DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 448 CE 075 363

AUTHOR Kerka, Sandra

TITLE Will We All Be Portfolio Workers? Trends and Issues Alerts.

INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT RR93002001
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Compensation (Remuneration); *Employer Employee Relationship; *Employment Patterns; *Employment Qualifications; Fringe Benefits; Labor Market; *Occupational Mobility; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Temporary Employment

ABSTRACT

The world of stable, long-term employment is coming to an end. Part-time, contingent, and contract workers now account for more than 35% of the U.S. work force. It has been suggested that individuals will become "portfolio workers" with "portfolio careers." Individuals will maintain portfolios of their skills, abilities, and achievements and will use those portfolios to obtain temporary assignments in a variety of organizations rather than securing permanent jobs. Downsizing and reorganization are forcing individuals to consider themselves a collection of attributes and skills rather than a job title. The key skills of portfolio workers are as follows: versatility; flexibility; creativity; self-direction; interpersonal and communication skills; facility with computer and information technology; ability to learn continuously; and ability to manage work, time, and money. Many individuals find portfolio work attractive for the freedom and flexibility it affords; on the other hand, there are many part-time workers who would prefer to work full time but cannot do so. In the current work structure, benefits are still tied to full-time employment. Thus, those on the periphery often lack health care, pensions, and similar supports. At present, those most successful at portfolio work appear to be professionals with high-demand or unique skills. (Contains 27 annotated references.) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 448

Will We All Be Portfolio Workers?
Trends and Issues Alerts

Sandra Kerka

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE075363

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Will We All Be Portfolio Workers?

"The end of the job" (Bridges 1994). "The career is dead" (Hall et al. 1996). The world of stable, long-term employment is coming to an end. The numbers of part-time, contingent, and contract workers are increasing—more than 35% of the U.S. labor force, nearly 50% in Europe (Rapoport 1994). In this fundamental shift in the workplace, Charles Handy (1989) sees the emergence of the "portfolio worker" and the "portfolio career." In his view, individuals will maintain portfolios of their skills, abilities, and achievements with which they obtain temporary assignments in a variety of organizations, rather than securing permanent jobs. Other names for this "new millennium worker" are "professional eclectic" ("The New Economy" 1996) or "specialized generalist"(Boyett 1996; Dent 1995), who has a "protean career" (Hall et al. 1996).

As a result of the downsizing and reorganization of the past decade, many organizations have pared down to "core groups of full-time employees complemented by part-timers and networks for flexible staffing" (Olsten 1992, p. 2). Workers are being told to manage their work life as if they were individual corporations, viewing employers as clients to whom they must provide the best service for the money ("The New Economy" 1996). This requires a fundamental change of attitude and identity. Individuals should consider themselves a collection of attributes and skills, not a job title. The key skills of the portfolio worker are as follows: versatility, flexibility, creativity, self-direction, interpersonal and communication skills, facility with computer and information technology, ability to learn continuously, and ability to manage work, time, and money (Lemke et al. 1995; "The New Economy" 1996).

Many find this kind of work attractive for the freedom and flexibility it affords; already, at least 12 million full-time and 12 million part-time self-employed people work at home (Lemke et al. 1995). However, the other side of the story is many part-time and underemployed people who want to work full time (Livingston 1997). Because, in the current work structure, benefits are still tied to full-time employment, those on the periphery often lack health care, pensions, and similar supports (Stewart 1992). The Phoenix Project (1997) suggests that outsourcing and contingent employment allows companies to be socially responsible for only a minimum of employees; portfolio workers have no rights and are vulnerable to exploitation.

At present, those most successful at portfolio work appear to be professionals with high-demand or unique skills (Livingston 1997). Until such proposals as Rifkin's (1995) social wage are adopted, it remains to be seen how widespread portfolio work will become. Handy (1996) hopes that it will, seeing the benefit of thinking of life, not as work and leisure, but as a portfolio of activities—some done for money, some for interest, some for pleasure, and some for a cause. Preparing workers for the independence and interdependence this new work ethic requires will be a challenge for adult, career, and vocational educators.

Resources

Boyett, J. H. et al. "21st Century Workplace Trends." *On the Horizon*, 1996. <http://sunsite.unc.edu/horizon/gems/listarchive/96list/0097.html>

Perhaps half of the work force will be contingent workers employed in part-time, temporary, contract, or other nontraditional jobs within 5 years. Many will be self-employed professionals. The new workplace will reward the specialized generalist who has a solid basic education plus professional and technical skills in demand across a range of companies or industries.

Bridges, W. "The End of the Job." *Fortune* 130, no. 6 (September 19, 1994): 62-74. (EJ 488 975)
The "job" is a social artifact that has outlived its usefulness. Instead, individuals will work on multiple changing tasks, not necessarily with the same organization. Personnel management and policies and the organization of the work day and the workplace will change.

Bridges, W. *Job Shift. How to Prosper in a World without Jobs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994.
Work will no longer be contained in the familiar envelopes known as jobs, because the rapid pace of change makes such rigid solutions inadequate. Project-based organizations will employ the right people for the project at hand—"just-in-time" employment.

Cawsey, T. F. et al. "The Portfolio Career as a Response to a Changing Job Market." *Journal of Career Planning and Employment* 56, no. 1 (November 1995): 41-46. (EJ 514 466)
Stable, long-term career security is becoming a thing of the past, requiring new ways of thinking about, and framing relationships among, work, organizations, payment, and value for effort. The portfolio career concept with which individuals recognize their value to organizations comes about because of skills held that produce results.

Dalton, F. "Building Your Cadre of Mentors." *AFE Facilities Engineering Journal* March-April 1997. <http://www.facilitiesnet.com/guest/NS/NS3a7cd.html>
Portfolio workers amass numerous skills and competencies that they provide to a variety of companies on a contract basis. The responsibility for career growth and development is squarely with the individual, and multiple and diverse mentoring relationships are essential.

Dent, H. S., Jr. *Job Shock*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
In the ongoing work revolution, four principles for success are as follows: maintain your strategic focus—do only what you do best; organize around your customers and your front lines; establish every individual, team, and unit as a business; and link everybody in real-time information systems. The new career paths include becoming a specialized generalist (front-line information user) or a generalized specialist (back-line information provider).

"The Economy of the Future: Painting the Picture." *Career Paths Online* 4, no. 1 Youth Employment Skills Canada, Burnaby, BC, 1996. <http://careerpathsonline.com/economy/trends/painting.html>
In the new economy, portfolio workers will have a collection of skills: entrepreneurial skills to manage careers, obtain contracts, and organize time and finances; job-specific skills and knowledge; literacy, numeracy, and computer skills; and above all communication and interpersonal skills.

Ettore, B. "A Conversation with Charles Handy." *Organizational Dynamics* 25, no. 1 (Summer 1996): 15-26.
Handy sees a withering of the "employment organization." Many people will become "portfolio workers" selling their skills to a variety of clients.

Haapaniemi, P. "Portfolio Workers." *Chief Executive* CEO Brief Supplement, July-August 1996, p. 14.
According to Charles Handy, as the corporation moves away from the hierarchical, command-and-control approach to people, it will become

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

more of a community. The rest will be organized in mercenary groups: portfolio workers, specialists who come in for projects as needed.

Hall, D. T. et al. *The Career Is Dead . . . Long Live the Career.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.
The "protean" career is driven by the individual, not the organization. The new career contract is a one-day contract in which all that matters is current value. A portfolio company becomes a collection of flexible and variously skilled human resources.

Handy, C. *The Age of Unreason.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1989.
Defines five categories of work for the portfolio: wage, fee, household, gift, and study. Suggests that a "portfolio life" is more secure than a one-income life.

Handy, C. "Portfolio Life." In *The Book of Visions: An Encyclopedia of Social Inventions,* edited by N. Albery. Institute for Social Inventions, 1992. <ftp.newciv.org/worldtrans/BOV/BOV/BV-157.html>
Handy considers life a portfolio of activities, some of which are done for money, some for interest, some for pleasure, and some for a cause. That way, one single occupation is not responsible for job satisfaction, financial rewards, and social outlets, and if one part fails, the whole is not ruined.

Human Resource Development Canada. "Wanted: Portfolio Workers." *Canada Prospects. Tools & Strategies,* 1995. <http://www.globalx.net/ocd/prospects/tools/index.html#1>
The kind of person who is versatile, can handle many types of challenges, and consider different kinds of employment is a portfolio worker. The work portfolio is a diverse collection of abilities and knowledge, and portfolio careers are not linear, but zig-zag.

Kleiman, C. "Many Firms Say They Haven't Saved Money by Outsourcing." *Columbus Dispatch,* August 31, 1997, p. 25J.
More than half of companies surveyed by the American Management Association have taken back at least one outsourced activity, and only 25% found that outsourcing reduced costs.

Kotter, J. P. *The New Rules: How to Succeed in Today's Post-Corporate World.* New York: Free Press, 1995.
The new rules of work recognize that the location of opportunities is shifting; it is better to be small, entrepreneurial, and less hierarchical; and lifelong learning is essential.

Lemke, J.M. et al. "New Directions for Corporate Careers." *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 3-27. (EJ 515 582)
Includes "Career Sidestepping" (Prescott); "Temporary Work Life" (Farrugia); and "Teleworking: Commuting on the Information Highway" (Petrie).

Livingston, S. "Living the Part-time Life." *Plain Dealer [Cleveland],* August 24, 1997, pp. 1-A, 14-A.
Most "nonstandard" workers receive lower wages and are less likely to have health insurance or pensions. Those most successful at contract and contingent work appear to be those with high-demand or unique skills.

Logan, D. C., and Kritzell, B. *Reinventing Your Career: Following the 5 New Paths to Career Fulfillment.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.
Describes new career paths such as creating enterprises, results-oriented consulting, becoming an expert, and facilitating others. Suggests that one-time assignments give workers freedom and higher earnings and are easier to obtain.

National Alliance of Business. "The 'Contingent' Workforce: Temporary Phenomenon or Permanent Fixture?" *Workforce Economics* 2, no. 2 (June 1996): 7-10. (ED 398 424)
Companies are using more temporary workers, but these new employment arrangements provide new entry points into the labor market and serve as a bridge to more traditional employment relationships for new labor market entrants and dislocated workers. The growth of the contingent work force reflects not just the business need for flexibility but also employees' demands for flexibility.

"The New Economy." *Career Paths Online.* 4, no. 1. Burnaby, BC: Youth Employment Skills Canada, 1996. <http://www.careerpathsonline.com/economy/>
Describes trends and new work styles in the following articles: "You Unlimited"; "Work in the Year 2002"; "A Career I Can Live with"; and "The New Millennium Worker: Professional Eclectic."

Nussbaum, B. "I'm Worried about My Job!" *Business Week,* October 7, 1991, pp. 94-97.
White-collar workers are joining the ranks of once secure employees who are finding themselves on the outside—alone, afraid and angry. The only security for today's migrant managers and professionals is in the portfolio of skills they can sell.

Olsten Corp. *New Staffing Strategies for the 90s.* Westbury, NY: Olsten Corp., 1992. (ED 343 031)
Reports on a survey focused on the types of staffing and scheduling strategies being implemented to meet today's business needs. The survey addresses staffing strategies: contract or flexible staffing and alternative scheduling and four powerful forces moving companies toward such staffing strategies: economic and competitive pressures, the need to contain costs, a shrinking labor pool, and a more diverse work force.

Phoenix Project. "Theoretical Background." Paris: Trans Europe Halles, 1996. <http://fph.fr/phoenix/ustext1.html>
Argues that outsourcing, contracting, and contingency work allow companies to be socially responsible for a minimum number of employees. Maintains that portfolio workers have no rights and are vulnerable.

Rapoport, C. "Charles Handy Sees the Future." *Fortune* 130, no. 9 (October 31, 1994): 155-168.
Handy's principle of upside-down thinking says that governments cannot afford benefits. Education will have to become never-ending. Corporate taxes will go up if companies do not recognize their role in training and education. Workers will need to learn how to value time as well as money.

Rifkin, J. *The End of Work.* New York: Putnam, 1995.
With the disappearance of permanent, marketplace opportunities, the time is right for a shift to "work" in the social economy, in nonprofit, volunteer, community service organizations in which people would be paid a "social wage."

Stevens, J. "Flexible Working Has Yet to Kill the Traditional Job." *People Management* 1, no. 23 (November 16, 1995): 57.
Reports on two studies that examined people's attitudes toward changing patterns of employment. The first dealt with labor turnovers, and the second sheds light on the extent to which people want to become—or might adjust to becoming—portfolio workers.

Yate, M. *Beat the Odds: Career Buoyancy Tactics for Today's Turbulent Job Market.* New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.
Provides advice on establishing a solid job base with a professional core career in a healthy, growing industry; making use of that core career as a foundation to build a thriving entrepreneurial career; and always keeping a dream career in sight.

Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under Contract No. RR93002001. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department. *Trends and Issues Alerts* may be freely reproduced.

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 Kenny Road • Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090

BEST COPY AVAILABLE